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Viewing cable 08MANAGUA1343, NICARAGUA CPC UPDATE: "KING OF THE ROTUNDA"

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Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

To understand the justification used for the classification of each cable, please use this [WikiSource](#) article as reference.

Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#08MANAGUA1343**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
08MANAGUA1343	2008-11-03 23:08	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Managua

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758456.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758467.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758468.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758464.aspx>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/4103/la-embusa-y-el-gabinete-de-ortega>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/4104/d-rsquo-escoto-en-onu-ldquo-un-desafio-de-ortega-a-ee-uu-rdquo>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/4102/estrada-y-la-ldquo-doble-cara-rdquo-ante-ee-uu>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3966/la-ldquo-injerencia-rdquo-de-ee-uu-en-el-2006>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-23/Mundo/Relacionados/Mundo2758764.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-23/Mundo/NotaPrincipal/Mundo2758753.aspx>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/4041/millones-de-dolares-sin-control-y-a-discrecion>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/4040/la-ldquo-injerencia-rdquo-de-venezuela-en-2006>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/4047/rodrigo-barreto-enviado-de-ldquo-vacaciones-rdquo>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-16/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2757239.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-16/Mundo/NotaPrincipal/Mundo2746658.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-16/Mundo/Relacionados/Mundo2757244.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-16/Mundo/Relacionados/Mundo2746673.aspx>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3991/dra-yadira-centeno-desmiente-cable-diplomatico-eeuu>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3968/pellas-pronostico-a-eeuu-victoria-de-ortega-en-2006>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3967/barreto-era-ldquo-fuente-confiable-rdquo-para-eeuu>

VZCZCXRO2122
PP RUEHLMC
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ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 032308Z NOV 08
FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3332
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUMIAAA/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL//J2/J3/J5// PRIORITY
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANAGUA 001343

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/24/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [NU](#)
SUBJECT: NICARAGUA CPC UPDATE: "KING OF THE ROTUNDA"

REF: A. MANAGUA 1151
[1](#)B. MANAGUA 989

Classified By: Amb. Robert J. Callahan for reasons 1.4(b) & (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: The continued, illegal occupation of Managua's main rotundas by paid supporters of Nicaraguan First Lady Rosario Murillo is approaching its third month. Titled the "campaign against hatred," it is designed to close democratic spaces for the opposition and prevent a fair municipal election campaign. END SUMMARY

King of the Rotunda
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[1](#)2. (SBU) The failure of the Nicaraguan government to reconstruct Managua's historic downtown area after the devastating 1972 earthquake prevented the formation of a central location for large public demonstrations. Instead, strategic rotundas that facilitate traffic flow are the main gathering spots for public rallies in today's capital. In fact, most strikes, political rallies, marches and protests in Managua usually start or end at one of these major rotundas, most of which are park-like and have monuments to important Nicaraguan political or cultural figures. Recognizing their importance, the mayor's office requires that public demonstrators file for a permit to temporarily occupy a rotunda well in advance of any planned rally. During past elections, occupying Managua rotundas has been a "king of the hill" game fought between political parties, and carefully supervised by police.

[1](#)3. (C) This year the traditional "king of the hill" game has changed. As reported in REFTEL B, the last legal public rally at a Managua rotunda took place on July 30, when a bus load of youth arrived at the Ruben Dario rotunda to protest the waste of public resources on the pink and yellow pro-Ortega propaganda that decorates many of the billboards in Managua. The youth included activists from the Movement Vamos Con Eduardo (VCE), and the Sandinista Renewal Movement (MRS) political parties. The group had pre-registered with the Mayor's office to occupy the rotunda for the day. However, when they arrived, they were met by a large group of FSLN-youth, pro-Ortega sympathizers, who somehow knew beforehand about the protest. In the altercation that followed, an FSLN-supported television reporter, Antenor Pena Solano, was wounded in the leg from what initially was believed to be a bullet fired by the protesters and chaos erupted. The FSLN supporters pelted the pro-transparency protesters, bus with rocks and threatened adult organizers with assault. Police were called in to end the violence, but the opposition protesters were never able to begin their legal occupation of the rotunda. The media melee that followed the broadcasting of Pena's wound at the alleged hands of the anti-government protestors set the stage for the ultimate round of "king of the rotunda" currently underway

in Managua. (NOTE: a subsequent medical investigation revealed that Pena,s wounds were not the result of a bullet wound, but were from a kick to his leg. And the police investigation revealed that the gunshots were fired from a white truck that was circling the rotunda, and not by the protesters, who did not have any firearms. END NOTE)

Attacking the Media First

14. (C) The current Murillo/CPC demonstration, alternatively known as the "prayer against hatred" or "love is stronger than hate" campaign, started as a two-day theatrical protest in front of television station Canal 2, and the main independent newspapers La Prensa and El Nuevo Diario. Participants wore white tee-shirts with pink slogans "love is stronger than hate," (a not so veiled double entendre with faux pious religious references to Christ,s "love those that hate you," and a manifestation of Murillo,s view that only those who hate her/Nicaragua would be critical of the government). They joined hands to pray against media outlets, and women waving crucifixes wanted to "exorcise" popular TV political commentator Jaime Arelleno for his daily talk-show program that criticized the Ortega government. Weeks later, Arelleno was forced to leave Canal 2 because of government pressure against the television station owners, who feared that the government would not renew their media license if Arelleno remained (see REF A).

Campaign of Hate - The Ultimate "King of the Rotunda"

MANAGUA 00001343 002 OF 002

15. (C) What initially began as a quasi-religious protest against the most vocal media opponents to the Ortega government evolved, over-night, into an expensive, 24-hour and seven-day-a-week campaign to occupy the main rotundas of Managua. Media reports that twenty or more daily "volunteers" come in two 12-hour shifts - a day-shift for CPC/FSLN members, and a night shift for the Nemagon banana protestors who have been camping in front of the National Assembly since the 2006 elections. Each volunteer receives free transportation, free meals, and approximately 200 Cordobas (\$10 USD) a day to participate. This has been corroborated by other sensitive reporting. During their 12-hour shift, the participants join hands for prayers at least once an hour; otherwise, they are usually loitering on the rotunda under the shade tents, or waving Nicaragua,s blue and white national flag at Managua drivers.

16. (C) The Ortega government,s public relations campaign wants the Nicaraguan people to believe that this is a spontaneously organized religious protest. But the campaign is too well organized to be spontaneous, even though there are no "official organizers" for the prolonged protest. Each rotunda has everything necessary for the "volunteer" participants to maintain their indefinite occupation of Managua,s rotundas: portable toilets, shade tents, electricity for loud-speakers that play patriotic and religious music, large Nicaraguan flags, and more white tee shirts and pink banners with the slogans "love is stronger than hate" and "prayer against hatred." Sources tell us that the mostly middle-aged participants have been coached to deny to the media that they receive any daily remuneration, and instead claim that they are simply "peaceful volunteers who want to pray against hatred." The hatred they refer to is any anti-Ortega or anti-government message.

A Violation of Municipal & Election Laws

17. (C) Managua mayor, Jose Dionisio "Nicho" Marenco, a Sandinista who has fallen out of favor with President Ortega, said that the continuing occupation of the rotundas is illegal, and that there are no permits for the protest.

(NOTE: The protest also became a violation of Nicaraguan electoral law on September 25 when the elections officially began. However, the CSE, which oversees elections, has hesitated to criticize the protests, citing their "religious" nature. END NOTE). The Nicaraguan police have also not been called upon to remove the government-funded protester from the Managua rotundas. (COMMENT: The police inaction against the illegal rotunda protesters is just one more example in a series of its growing complicity and collusion with the Sandinista government (SEPTEL). END COMMENT)

COMMENT

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18. (C) In the traditional "king of the rotunda" election season battle, Murillo's "campaign against hate" has effectively blocked democratic forces from having a place to hold their rallies. Demonstrators' claims to be religious volunteers instead of party operatives masks their true purpose which is to silence opposition and pre-empt any possibility of large scale opposition protests. Moreover, the so-called "campaign against hate" has actually set the stage for violent confrontations between the opposition and the CPC members who occupy the rotundas during the official election campaign.

CALLAHAN